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ABSTRACT

The articles in this monograph reflect varying points of view as expressed by state and local education administrators, parents, and students concerning the provision of distinctive services for language-minority students. The introduction provides a legislative history of educational programs and services for limited-English speaking students. State and local administrators describe educational programs and goals of their units. The parents' articles discuss the difficulties of adjustment and the need parents feel to hold onto their own heritage and history. The students discuss their experiences in school and in bilingual or English as a Second Language programs. (PS)

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Education for Language Minorities:

The Perspectives of Administrators, Parents, and Youth

Ronald A. Howard, Ph.D.
Editor

A Publication of

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Additional copies of this publication may be ordered from NASBE, priced at $6.50 each. Prepayment or authorized purchase orders required.

On a related topic, we refer you to another NASBE publication, *A Policymaker's Guide to Special Language Services for Language Minority Students* (1983). Cost is $6.50 each and may be orderd from NASBE.

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Foreword

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the number of non-English language speakers in the U.S. has increased from 28 million in 1976 to 30 million in 1980 and is projected to grow to 34.7 million in 1990 and to 39.5 million by the year 2000. One of the greatest challenges facing our schools in the 16 short years between the year 1984 and the year 2000 is the education of students with little or no command of English. These students do not deserve the sort of "equal treatment" that lets them sink or swim with no extra support. Nor do they deserve the kind of "special treatment" that labels them deficient and withholds them from the mainstream any longer than necessary. The challenge is to integrate limited-English proficient students into the regular classroom as soon as they are able in order to provide them with a full education and the solid command of English they will need to be active citizens. Let us keep this firmly in mind as we explore the issues.

States have a major responsibility for the education of language-minority students, including the design, coordination, and evaluation of services. This responsibility is essential in order that limited-English proficient students receive the multitude of distinctive services to which they are entitled.

The articles in this monograph reflect varying points of view as expressed by state and local education administrators, parents, and students concerning the provision of distinctive services for language-minority students. We hope that this information is useful to all who have an interest in the education of these students.

— *Phyllis L. Blaunstein*
Executive Director, NASBE

Introduction

The education of language-minority children has been a concern to policymakers and educators for the past 25 years. The increase in the non-English-speaking population, coupled with the rise of the civil rights movement, helped pave the way for legislation and court decisions affecting educational programs and services for limited-English proficient (LEP) students.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 barred discrimination on grounds of national origin in any federally funded program or activity (42 USC 2000d). The government interpreted language as central to national origin and, in particular, held that language-minority children were entitled to extra help to overcome their lack of proficiency in English. As the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare noted in a 1970 memorandum:

> Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin-minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students (Pottinger, 1970, p.1).

In 1974 this interpretation was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Lau* v. *Nichols*. The parents of about 1,800 Chinese-speaking students had sued the San Francisco School District for failure to provide the children with special instruction in English similar to that being provided to other Chinese-speaking students in the district. The Supreme Court specifically rejected the argument that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act was satisfied by providing these children with the same instructional opportunities offered other students.

> There is no equality of treatment by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum [for] students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education (*Lau, supra*, p.565).

The Court affirmed OCR's position that the school districts had to do something special to "rectify the language deficiency" and thus incorporate language-minority students into the instruction program.

An issue on which the Court specifically declined to take a position was the particular remedy to be used. Historically, the judicial branch of the federal government has been reluctant to become involved in curriculum issues and judgments between educational methods. *Lau* v. *Nichols* explicitly left to the school district the choice of how best to help the Chinese-speaking students, remarking that "teaching English to students of Chinese ancestry is one choice. Giving instruction to this group in Chinese is another. There may be others" (*Lau, supra*, p.2).

Flexibility in how to teach language-minority children was also the original approach of the U.S. Congress in Title VII (the Bilingual Education Act) of

the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1968). This legislation authorized research, pilot projects, and the development of curricula to help those who were, in the words of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, "educationally disadvantaged because of their inability to speak English."

However, two developments changed the federal posture with regard to method of instruction. First, Congress amended Title VII in 1974; in addition to extending the Act to cover more children, Congress mandated inclusion of the mother tongue in instruction and required biocultural instruction as well. Second, in 1975 OCR developed guidelines, or "remedies," regarding the educational approaches that OCR contended were necessary to satisfy the Supreme Court decision in *Lau* v. *Nichols*. These guidelines came to be known as the Lau Remedies.

The Lau Remedies

The OCR guidelines were sent to regional OCR offices as "Task Force Findings Specifying Remedies Available for Eliminating Past Educational Practices and Rules Unlawful Under *Lau* v. *Nichols* (Lau Remedies)." The Lau Remedies expressed complete reliance on bilingual-bicultural or multilingual-multicultural programs and stated that compliance plans based solely on teaching English as a second language (ESL) or on other non-bilingual approaches were unacceptable. Despite an explicit statement by the Lau Court that it had made no determination as to method, the Lau Remedies stated that special instruction in English was, by itself, "not appropriate" in meeting the educational needs of LEP students.

In 1976 OCR appeared to relent somewhat, reminding its regional offices that the Lau Remedies were merely guidelines and that the offices could not prohibit the school districts from providing only ESL instruction. School districts were reminded, however, that they were under an obligation to prove that their programs were as effective as those programs which included native language instruction.

In 1980 the U.S. Department of Education proposed regulations that, in essence, would have turned the disputed Lau Remedies into the law of the land. The proposal met strong opposition, particularly from those who were concerned with the federal government's mandating a single method of instruction. U.S. Secretary of Education T. H. Bell withdrew the proposed regulations in 1981 and announced that they would be replaced by new regulations giving school districts more flexibility in deciding how best to educate language-minority students (Bell, 1981).

The Lau Remedies are technically still in effect, since new regulations have yet to be adopted, but OCR's application of the remedies has changed significantly. School districts' plans are now reviewed on the basis of evidence that they are likely to work, rather than on whether they meet the standards prescribed in the Lau Remedies (Rotberg, 1980, p.154). Furthermore, the current administration is seeking to increase the options of local education agencies by proposing that a school district be permitted to adopt any approach it believes is appropriate, as long as the program is designed to meet the special needs of language-minority children.

The proposed Bilingual Education Improvements Act of 1983, submitted to Congress by the Department of Education on April 13, 1983, states, again, that the goal of legislation is to enable children of limited-English proficiency to achieve competency in the English language. Towards this goal, school systems would be permitted to select their own instructional methods.

Adoption of this legislation would bring national policy full circle to the words of *Lau* v. *Nichols* and to the original intent of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, making it unmistakable that it is up to state and local school systems to decide how best to provide special help to students who have little or no command of English.

The articles that follow help to illustrate the diversity of approaches to serving LEP students, so that readers may better understand the choices now available to policymakers.

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THE STATE PERSPECTIVE

The Arizona Perspective

By Nancy Mendoza

Arizona's public school population includes students from a wide variety of language backgrounds. The 1983 Arizona Primary Language Census revealed that 16 percent, or 87,490, of the students in grades K-12 have a primary language other than English. Of these, 70 percent have Spanish and 17 percent have Navajo as a primary language. The other language groups include additional Indian languages and Asian and other non-Indian languages. These students present a unique challenge to Arizona educators.

From 1968 to 1980, the state of Arizona had statutes providing categorical funding to programs of bilingual education. This funding was allotted on a per-child basis of $50 a school year. While this funding was recognizably minimal, it did allow for the implementation of programs in some 50 districts in the state.

In April 1980 the Arizona Legislature, in a complete overhaul of the state's School Finance Program, eliminated a number of categorical programs, among them bilingual education. In place of categorical funding, a block grant was established based on a weighted student count. This weighted count includes a support level for each student, with latitude for a district to operate a number of special programs with the funds generated by the count. Bilingual programs may be conducted with funds from the block grant, but there is no mandate to offer such programs. A district has the option of operating those programs it determines to have priority. The budget formats that districts use to identify expenditures list bilingual education as a single line item, thereby enabling the public to be aware of the level of funding for that purpose.

Because of the permissive nature of Arizona legislation, the impact of the federal stance on this issue was substantial from 1975 to 1980, coinciding with the issuance of the *Lau Remedies* in 1975, and the withdrawal of the *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (NPRM) in 1980. During this five-year period, many districts implemented programs for the first time, in some cases as a result of a finding of noncompliance by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights with regard to Title VI requirements for national-origin minority students. Districts that were not cited for noncompliance gained heightened awareness of their obligations and of the unique needs of limited-English proficient (LEP) students.

The federal initiative related to compliance generated renewed interest and development in programs designed for LEP students. The *Lau Remedies* became the presumed program standard, and districts measured their efforts against that standard. The withdrawal of the proposed Lau Regulations and the subsequent denial of the *Lau Remedies* as a standard generated a perception among some districts that the obligation to provide special assistance to LEP

students had been abrogated. Nonetheless, those districts that had already established programs tended to continue their efforts, as evidenced by the *Annual Report of Program Services* submitted by districts to the Arizona Department of Education.

What is the role of a state Bilingual Education Office when there is no mandate to offer bilingual education programs? In some respects, the role is an enviable one. It is to promote and provide leadership for such programs without the specter of sanction. While it may be true that not all LEP students are properly served in such a framework, it is also true that mandates often alienate school administrators, thereby making implementation efforts ineffective.

The Arizona Department of Education, in conjunction with individuals and school districts throughout the state, has developed and implemented a variety of programs, documents, and instructional materials that promote services to LEP students. These efforts, which have been funded primarily by the ESEA Title VII grant to state education agencies (SEAs), fall into the following categories:

- Identification
- Language Proficiency Assessment of Students
- Program Design
- Curriculum
- Program Evaluation
- Language Proficiency Assessment of Teachers
- Policy

Identification

Before 1978, estimates of the number of students in Arizona whose primary language was not English were based on assumptions about ethnicity and language. Since 1978, the Department of Education has conducted an annual census of primary languages of public school students.

The census is accomplished as part of the Department's end-of-year enrollment count. A separate computer scan sheet for primary language is included as part of the data collection packet sent to each district. The sheet lists 43 languages and two categories of "other" for languages not listed, one for Indian and the other for non-Indian languages.

For the purposes of the census, the student's primary home language is classified as "other than English" if at least one of the following descriptions is true:

- The language most often spoken in the student's home is other than English, regardless of the language spoken by the student.
- The language most often spoken by the student is other than English.
- The student's first acquired language is other than English.

The census report is published annually, providing analysis by grade level and by language for each district in the state, as well as statewide summary and trend data. This identification process certainly makes a significant contribution

to information about students in Arizona public schools, but it does have limitations that should be considered by other states contemplating such an initiative:

1. A primary language census is only a "first cut" — a first-level identification of the potential LEP population. It does not provide a LEP count.
2. Procedurally, there is concern about the source of the information. Did the parent, the teacher, or the student provide the information? The Department does not currently conduct a validity study to determine measurement error.
3. The census currently includes only the public schools. Significant numbers of Indian students in Arizona attend U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, contract, parochial, and day schools. These same students may and do enter the public school system. The impact of this population on public schools is not accounted for under current procedures.

Language Proficiency Assessment of Students

The Arizona Department of Education, through a State Board of Education rule, requires that all students in bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) programs be assessed for language proficiency. The state does not, however, stipulate which tests are acceptable for assessing language proficiency, nor the specific score ranges for determining program eligibility.

To assist school districts in the selection of test instruments, the state Bilingual Education Office conducted a national survey of SEAs in the fall of 1981 to collect information about the tests being used in state bilingual education projects.

Responses were received from 38 SEAs. The survey generated a list of 53 different tests. The four most frequently used commercial tests, listed in order of frequency of use, were:

1. *Language Assessment Scales I and II*, published by Linguametrics Group.
2. *Bilingual Syntax Measure, I and II*, published by the Psychological Corporation.
3. *Basic Inventory of Natural Language*, published by CHECpoint Systems Inc.
4. *Language Assessment Battery*, published by Houghton Mifflin, Inc.

The authors of these four instruments were invited to present the theoretical framework, administrative procedures, and psychometric characteristics of their instruments at a seminar series offered by the Arizona Department of Education. The resulting publication, *Language Proficiency Assessment: Concepts, Purposes, and Applications*, gives the proceedings of the seminar series, along with reviews of the instruments by various authors.

This effort provided options for districts with regard to the assessment of English and Spanish language proficiency, but did not generate significant results for assessment of American Indian language proficiency.

A committee representing various Arizona Indian language groups and service centers was convened by the Department to consider strategies for providing support to those projects in need of measurements for Indian languages. The committee worked for more than a year to develop the Department's most recent publication, *American Indian Language Proficiency Assessment: Considerations and Resources*.

This document, which was presented at the 1983 National Indian Child Conference, provides direction to local projects for the development of tests for language proficiency. Designed for use by bilingual project staff, it also provides an introduction to the basic concepts of linguistics and test development. Of special interest are the recommendations regarding the development of a language data base for a given language community, from which assessment strategies can be derived.

The guide includes a list, by language group, of Arizona Indian language linguists who are available to assist local projects in the development of tests.

Program Design

In most Arizona school districts, students whose primary language is other than English tend to be in one language group. However, some districts have students from a variety of language groups. Given this diversity, programs must be tailored to individual sites. To assist in the development of programs for LEP students, the Department will distribute early in 1984 a notebook called *Strategies for Addressing the Needs of Limited English Proficient Students*. The notebook offers strategies for the regular classroom teacher in school systems without a districtwide program, as well as many elementary and secondary bilingual program models and alternatives. Steps to program implementation and resources are included. These may appear to be very basic steps for states in which a mandate has been in effect for a number of years, but in Arizona the effort is crucial. More than 50 districts in which the number of students with a primary language other than English exceeds 10 percent offer neither an ESL nor a bilingual program. These districts must be assisted in determining whether special services are needed and in initiating programs where need exists.

Curriculum

The Arizona State Board of Education has adopted a Basic Skills Program for grades K-12. This program delineates the skills the Board believes are essential for all students in mathematics, language arts, and citizenship.

The skills are listed on poster-size charts intended for display in the school and/or the home so that all parents, teachers, and students can be aware of these essential skills.

The skills lists are supported by instructional activities kits. Each activity in a kit is designed to promote the acquisition or development of a specific skill. The activity kits enable a teacher, aide, or volunteer instructor to focus on the essential skills.

The skills charts and activity kits are available in Spanish for grades K-6 and in Navajo for grades K-3. These materials enhance local districts' ability to provide quality instructional programs in these additional languages, parallel to the English curriculum. The fact that bilingual instructional programs afford access to the same curriculum as non-bilingual programs has come as a surprise to many non-bilingual educators. The Basic Skills Program has served to dispel a misconception about the intent of native language instruction.

A third component of the Basic Skills Program is parental participation. Booklets designed for use by parents in the home contain activities to further develop the basic skills listed on the charts. The booklets, available in English and Spanish for grades K-6, promote the role of the parent as a teacher.

Program Evaluation

It is widely recognized that statewide evaluation of bilingual education programs is often superficial. With the exception of a few states, in which evaluation is part of a state-mandated program, comprehensive statewide evaluation that controls for such variables as treatment, student characteristics, teacher training, and experience, is not conducted. There is no statewide evaluation in Arizona.

The inadequacy of evaluation at the level of the local education agency (LEA) contributes to the difficulty of conducting statewide evaluation. For bilingual program directors, evaluation activities are only one of the many areas of responsibility. Many program directors have had little formal training in this aspect of their duties. The Arizona Department of Education, alone and in conjunction with Title VII centers, has conducted many training sessions on program evaluation. LEA application of the strategies offered in the training sessions was often minimal. Therefore, during the 1982-83 school year, a new approach to evaluation training was funded by the Department and the Bilingual Education Service Center of San Diego (California) State University and conducted in cooperation with the Center for Bilingual Education at Arizona State University.

The Evaluation Practicum, conducted on a year-long basis, aimed to:

1. Familiarize participants with differing perspectives of bilingual program evaluation;
2. Assist participants in developing their own evaluation design;
3. Assist participants in selecting relevant measures or measurement techniques;
4. Assist participants in the analysis of evaluation data; and
5. Assist participants in producing a final evaluation report.

Eight university professors were available during the year to work with a particular project on a selected aspect of evaluation, including methods for quantitative evaluation of student outcomes; computer-assisted evaluation techniques, enthographic techniques, language assessment, and reading and literacy evaluation; writing analysis; special education evaluation; and parental involvement.

Project representatives were allowed to participate for university credit if they wished.

This approach, which was both classroom- and field-based, yielded at least three outstanding outcomes: (1) participants learned to apply theoretical notions of evaluation to a particular area of interest within their own projects; (2) participants produced an evaluation report on an aspect of their projects that could serve such purposes as program planning and dissemination; and (3) participants shared with other Practicum members their experiences in implementing a particular design.

Language Proficiency Assessment of Teachers

A bilingual teacher credential, called the Bilingual Education Teacher (BET) Approved Area, is available but not uniformly required in Arizona. However, some school districts do require that their bilingual teachers be certified in this manner.

In order to obtain the BET, a candidate must have 15 hours of specialized training at an accredited university and have demonstrated proficiency in a language other than English.

Beginning in 1981, the Arizona Classroom Spanish Proficiency Exam, developed under an Arizona Department of Education Title VII grant, has been used in cooperation with the state universities (including colleges of education and departments of foreign language) and community colleges.

The exam is ethnographically based; that is, observations of bilingual classrooms were conducted to determine the nature of Spanish use in bilingual settings. The purpose and function of Spanish, as observed, determined the aspects of language use elicited in the exam.

The test includes the following areas:

1. *Oral comprehension of students*. The examinee views a videotaped classroom discussion and answers questions about the content in order to demonstrate comprehension of children's speech.

2. *Oral reading*. The examinee reads, with expression, a short literary selection, using correct pronunciation, as if reading to a group of elementary school children.

3. *Oral presentation of an instructional activity*. Based on instructions provided in a teacher's guide, the examinee presents a lesson as if teaching a group of elementary school children, using complete sentences, proper grammar, and correct pronunciation.

4. *Oral questions*. The examinee formulates questions on a reading selection as if posing these questions to a group of elementary school children.

5. *Technical vocabulary*. The examinee expresses in Spanish the English words and expressions provided orally or in writing, using correct pronunciation.

6. *Oral communication with parents*. The examinee shows that he/she can communicate orally with parents, using a professional style appropriate to the context and situation, as well as demonstrating correct grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

7. *Translation*. The examinee is given an announcement to be translated from English into Spanish, using correct grammar, spelling, vocabulary, style, and content.

8. *Reading a professional journal*. The examinee reads a short selection from a professional journal and writes a short essay using proper grammar, spelling, vocabulary, style, and content.

9. *Reading student compositions.* The examinee rewrites any incorrectly written work or group of words in student compositions.

A very detailed scoring system allows for differential assessment of various sections. For example, in Oral Communication with Parents, separate ratings are given for appropriateness (social and contextual), grammar, vocabulary, naturalness, and completeness (fluency).

The establishment of a systematic, uniform, and reliable procedure for diagnosis of language competence has enhanced the credibility of the BET credential.

Policy

Perhaps the most significant and far-reaching activity of the Arizona Department of Education has been a two-year contract with the Center for Bilingual Education at Arizona State University to review the present status of Arizona education policy regarding the non-English speaking student.

The policy study was conducted in two phases. The first phase included an exhaustive examination of current and future demographics, as well as existing legislative and regulatory requirements related to the LEP population. This phase produced preliminary findings and recommendations with specific attention to current state law, student identification, teacher training and certification, school finance, achievement testing, and special education.

The second phase provided representatives of various sectors of the educational community an opportunity to review and critique the preliminary draft. Among the groups participating in the review were the Arizona Education Association, the Arizona School Board Association, the State Board of Education, the Arizona Association of School Administrators, the Navajo Division of Education, as well as superintendents, teachers, bilingual and ESL program coordinators, and representatives of the Arizona Legislature and the state attorney general's office. These groups and individuals evaluated the draft and offered recommendations for modification. The final report, *State of Arizona Policy Analysis: The Non-English Speaking Child*, is a comprehensive examination of important issues related to LEP students incorporating the perceptions and viewpoints of a broad base of educators. It will help policymakers consider the needs of LEP students.

The efforts of the Arizona Department of Education described in this paper are important steps toward addressing the needs of LEP students in the state. They reflect, however, only initial progress toward a comprehensive incorporation of the LEP students' needs into the overall educational framework.

Nancy Mendoza *is the director of Bilingual Education for the Arizona State Department of Education. She has participated in several research projects on the education of language-minority children, including the recent National Institute of Education study of literacy development among bilinguals, and is the author of Bilingual Education Outcomes,* a paper commissioned by the National Center for Bilingual Research.

The Michigan Perspective

By Miguel A. Ruiz

The legislation that governs bilingual education in Michigan requires that:

> The board of a school district having an enrollment of 20 or more children of limited English-speaking ability in a language classification in grades K to 12 shall establish and operate a bilingual instruction program for those children.

The identification of limited-English proficient (LEP) students is governed by administrative rules adopted by the State Board of Education on July 13, 1982.

Funding

State funds have provided a major impetus to the development of bilingual education programs in Michigan.

In 1976-77, the state legislature appropriated $850,000, as an incentive to districts, for the establishment and operation of bilingual education programs. State aid was increased to $3 million in 1977-78, to $4 million in 1978-79, and to $4.5 million in 1979-80. In 1980-81, however, because of the state's financial situation, the appropriation was reduced to $3.15 million; the same amount was appropriated for 1981-82.

During the 1981-82 school year, 18,700 LEP students were enrolled in 67 bilingual programs representing 25 language groups. School districts received $168 for each student to whom bilingual education was provided. The Refugee Education Act of 1980 provided 88 local school districts an additional $143 per student for the basic and supplemental education provided to 2,050 students in over 30 language categories.

An analysis by the Michigan Office of Bilingual Education of bilingual programs for the 1981-82 school year shows great differences in methodology, in the amount of bilingual instruction, and in the curricular areas in which instruction in two languages was offered. Some districts provided bilingual instruction in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, while others provided instruction in English as a second language (ESL). The time spent on bilingual instruction varied from one half-hour to 30 hours per week.

Due to a continued shortage of teachers with bilingual endorsement, especially in languages other than Spanish, districts used bilingual aides to assist in the instruction of LEP students. Various approaches were adopted:

- A bilingual teacher provided full-time instruction within a self-contained classroom to all students, including those who were not limited in their English-speaking ability.
- A team-teaching approach combined a bilingual teacher with a monolingual English-speaking teacher in an expanded classroom for both LEP and non-LEP students.

- An itinerant resource teacher served more than one building and provided services to children in the regular classroom or in another part of the building.
- A bilingual tutor or aide provided individualized assistance to LEP students in the regular classroom or in another part of the building.
- A bilingual aide met with LEP students outside the regular classroom and provided individualized or small-group instruction. This approach, known as "pull-out," was the most commonly used.
- Resource centers were established, usually consisting of a classroom containing instructional and professional development materials and staffed by bilingual teachers and aides.

Some of the programs encouraged and assisted LEP students in developing communications skills in their native languages. All programs emphasized the learning of English.

A shortage of qualified bilingual teachers persists. The Bilingual Office of the Michigan Department of Education provides technical assistance to school districts in the training of bilingual staff. Workshops and inservice activities focus on such topics as ESL methodology, bilingual education, curriculum development, criteria for entering and exiting the programs, and cross-cultural understanding.

The federal government provided direct financial support for local school districts through Title VII. Federal funds were used to establish and operate programs and to train staff. In 1981-82, eleven school districts serving nine language groups received $2,795,135 in Title VII funds.

Intermediate School Districts

The legislation governing bilingual education in Michigan also provides for the establishment and operation of bilingual programs by intermediate school districts (ISDs), which are agencies operating at a regional level to provide coordination and supplementary services to local districts. The law states:

> In the case of school districts with fewer than twenty children of limited English-speaking ability, the board of the intermediate district must determine whether the total number of such children residing in its constituent districts that do not operate a bilingual instruction program warrants the establishment of an intermediate bilingual instruction-support program. In making such a determination, the board of the intermediate district shall consider whether:
>
> 1. the cost of operating the program is justified by the number of children at each grade level who would benefit from its establishment;
> 2. alternative methods, such as visiting teachers or part-time instruction, can be provided.

Evaluation

In 1981-82, the Office of Technical Assistance and Evaluation of the Michigan Department of Education analyzed the operation of bilingual programs. Sixty school districts provided data on 17,488 students; seven school districts provided no data. An analysis of scholastic achievement was based on 5,895

bilingual students in 21 districts. The three major language groups were Spanish (60.5 percent of the students), Arabic (22.2 percent), and Vietnamese (3.8 percent).

Conditional conclusions may be drawn from the evaluation data. Factors identified as contributing the most to the scholastic achievement of bilingual students were instruction by bilingual, endorsed teachers; time-on-task; and parental involvement with the school. The Office of Bilingual Education will continue to base technical assistance and program development on these factors.

The Bilingual Office of the Michigan Department of Education provides technical assistance to school districts in the training of bilingual staff. Workshops and inservice activities focus on such topics as ESL methodology, bilingual education, curriculum development, criteria for entering and exiting the programs, and cross-cultural understanding.

Two critical questions must be asked, however. First, how can the Office of Bilingual Education operate fully, in all the areas for which a legal obligation exists, at the current reduced level of funding? And, second, what remedies are available for bilingual students who are ineligible to continue in bilingual programs because they have received high scores on assessment tests but whose general academic performance is poor after leaving the program?

In an attempt to find answers, the Department of Education has recommended that:

1. The State Board of Education support increases in state administrative staff in the Office of Bilingual Education to assist districts in meeting their responsibilities to provide bilingual instruction to eligible students.
2. The State Board of Education direct staff to develop policies that would permit re-entry into the bilingual education program, within the existing three-year limit on eligibility, of students whose academic achievement declines after leaving the program.

Summary

The priorities of the Michigan Office of Bilingual Education include:

1. Monitoring school districts for compliance with state and federal legislation and regulations.
2. Continued recruitment of well-trained bilingual teachers representing various language groups.
3. Expanded efforts in parent training workshops for effective parental involvement with schools.

4. Development and identification of bilingual instructional materials in respective languages.
5. Ongoing evaluation of bilingual programs in order to identify beneficial programs for specific types of students.

Increased state and federal support is needed for teacher training and program development. The Office of Bilingual Education seeks to broaden support for bilingual education among the majority population by encouraging the formation of well-informed, active advisory committees, and the dissemination of accurate information to the bilingual education staff in school districts, teachers in the regular instructional program, administrators, and the general public.

Bilingual education in Michigan is still in a developmental stage. However, in many school districts, it is an accepted and well-supported program.

A variety of bilingual programs are in operation, ranging from a few minutes of bilingual instruction per week to instruction in a self-contained classroom with a certified bilingual teacher. The challenge is to put into place all the factors – human, material, financial, procedural, attitudinal – that will ensure full educational opportunity to LEP students. That effort will require the cooperation of local and intermediate school districts, colleges and universities, and the Michigan Department of Education.

Miguel A. Ruiz, Ph.D., *is director of Bilingual and Migrant Education Programs for the Michigan Department of Education. He is also a member of the State Superintendent's Executive Council and chairperson of the Department's Budget and Policy Committee. Dr. Ruiz formerly held the position of supervisor of Teacher Preparation and Certification Programs, Michigan Department of Education.*

The Rhode Island Perspective

By Virginia M.C. da Mota

The issue of local control in education has particular significance in Rhode Island, where the tradition of local autonomy is important to both local communities and the State Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. Those arguing for local choice insist that local educators are in the best position to select the nature and form of services to meet their students' needs. They point out that local educators are close to the children, understand local conditions affecting the learning environment, and have responsibility for teaching and learning in their schools. They argue that the selection of an educational approach is closely tied to what and how a child is taught, and that this should be left, as curricular matters traditionally have been, to local choice.

Although there is general agreement with the principle of local control, federal and state mandates are necessary in some cases. For example, communities faced with decreasing fiscal resources may automatically choose the least expensive alternative. By mandating a specific program, the state seeks to ensure the right of all children to equality of opportunity, which is a fundamental Constitutional guarantee.

Rhode Island Law

The Rhode Island English Language Proficiency Act (Title 16-54) for limited-English proficient (LEP) students was enacted in May 1982.

The Act states that it is the responsibility of all local school districts to provide appropriate programs and services to ensure that the educational opportunities of LEP students are equal to those of their English-dominant peers. The programs or services developed by local school districts must, at the very least, provide for the attainment of English language proficiency and academic achievement.

The Rhode Island Board of Regents and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are required to administer the Act in a manner consistent with its expressed aims and purposes.

The regulations adopted by the Board of Regents on June 14, 1983, are intended to provide direction to those at the local level who are responsible for carrying out the law.

Basically, two instructional approaches are recommended by the Board of Regents:

- **Transitional Bilingual Education Program**

The transitional bilingual education program provides instruction in English as a second language (ESL) while at the same time developing basic competencies in subject areas through native language instruction. The transitional bilingual

program provides for a gradual progression from instruction through the native language to instruction through the English language as the student's English language skills increase.

- **English as a Second Language (ESL) Program**

An ESL program provides for instruction in the development of English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The specialized ESL curriculum is designed to teach English as a second, rather than a first, language. Use of the student's native language in an ESL program is optional.

The regulations adopted by the Board of Regents outline a clear process by which local school districts can develop and establish appropriate educational programs and services for LEP students:

1. The school district shall determine the primary language of all public school children through a home-language survey.
2. The identification of students shall be an ongoing process; data from the language survey shall remain on file in the district.
3. The district shall assess the English language proficiency of all students whose primary language is other than English, and shall include evidence that students have been given, at a minimum, the following:
   a. English language proficiency tests that measure ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing appropriate to age/grade level; and
   b. a standardized reading test appropriate to age/grade level.
4. All students scoring below the publisher's cut-off scores on English language proficiency tests or below the 36th percentile on the standardized reading test using either local or national norms shall be considered for further assessment for placement purposes.
5. For students scoring below the 36th percentile, further assessment shall be conducted as follows:
   a. review of the student's educational background and grades or reports when available;
   b. measure of native language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, determined by native language proficiency tests, either verbal or written, when they are available and valid.
6. Consultation with teachers (i.e., regular classroom teachers, bilingual teachers when available, and ESL teachers), resource personnel, administrators and/or other appropriate district staff shall take place in order to determine appropriate student placement.
7. All student assessment/placement data, including questions of exceptionality, shall be recorded and forwarded to the appropriate district administator for proper program placement. These data shall be maintained by the district and become part of the student's permanent record file.
8. Programs shall be designed so that LEP students are not physically isolated from other students for any portion of the day unless such isolation is necessary to provide specialized instruction.
9. Programs shall provide opportunities for English as a second language instruction.
10. Programs shall provide opportunities for achievement in academic subjects.

11. Programs shall have goals, services, standards and, when available, materials comparable to the programs provided to English-proficient students.
12. Programs shall provide for the maintenance of data on the academic progress of students in the program.
13. Programs shall use personnel who have appropriate certification and endorsement by the Rhode Island State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the LEP position for which they are employed.
14. Programs shall be designed by local school district administrators in consultation with bilingual and ESL specialists, teachers, and parents.
15. The district shall employ as appropriate the following processes and criteria for ending a student's participation in bilingual education programs:
    a. teacher evaluation of English language proficiency and classroom performance;
    b. use of English language proficiency testing as appropriate to age/grade level;
    c. use of appropriate cut-off scores on English language proficiency tests and standardized reading tests (36th percentile using national or local norms);
    d. annual evaluation to assess readiness to leave the program (based on the criteria listed above);
    e. written notification to the parent/guardian, including an explanation of why the student is leaving the program (notification in both English and the parent's native language is generally required);
    f. provision for monitoring the performance of students for a minimum of two years after they have left the program.
16. Each district shall provide for the involvement of the parents/guardians of LEP students in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs for these students, including, at a minimum:
    a. involvement of parents/guardians in the design of programs;
    b. providing parents/guardians with a simple description of program placement and the criteria for leaving the program;
    c. providing parents/guardians with an opportunity to question program placement; and
    d. providing student progress reports to parents/guardians.
17. Each district shall have a comprehensive evaluation system to demonstrate the effectiveness of its program.

Central to the concept of equal educational opportunity is the goal of achieving new standards of academic excellence. This requires clear educational objectives, strong leadership, and firm commitment at all levels. The goal of educational excellence should be for all students.

Virginia M. C. da Mota *is the coordinator of the Unit for Limited English Proficient Students of the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. She has experience as a classroom bilingual education teacher and as a local school district administrator. She serves on many local, state, and national organizations and committees and is currently the vice chairperson of the Advisory Panel of the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.*

THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

The Local Perspective

By Marcelo R. Fernandez-Zayas

No one denies the pressing need to provide effective schooling for limited-English proficient (LEP) students. There is a good deal of debate, however, on the best method for teaching LEP children. Local policymakers, before adopting any plan of action, should become thoroughly familiar with all of the issues and options in the field of education for LEP students. Fortunately, there is extensive literature on the subject, pointing to the many approaches that have been opened since the late sixties. The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education offers a detailed review of literature and resources covering the areas of bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), and related topics.

The education of LEP children is, ultimately, a local issue to be solved at the local level, regardless of what may or may not transpire at the state and federal levels. State and federal authorities may contribute guidance and even resources, but experience tells us that local authorities may already be in troubled waters by the time state or federal help arrives.

The Assessment of LEP Children

One of the most important aspects of the education of LEP children is the correct identification and objective assessment of their needs. There is, for example, a great difference between a language problem and a speech problem. A student with a language problem lacks the English language skills needed to succeed in an all-English classroom. A student with a speech problem may need special education services. Incorrect assessment and diagnosis will cause the student undue hardship and may in some cases open the door to litigation against the school system.

Who is the LEP student and how long should he/she receive special assistance? The issues surrounding entrance and exit criteria are fraught with conflicting opinions. In most cases, entrance criteria are usually not difficult to determine, especially when students are demonstrably not proficient in the use of English. It is more difficult to reach agreement on exit criteria. Although there are many tests designed to measure language proficiency by age or grade level, there are no clear guidelines for determining how long a student should receive specialized help. Many factors are involved in setting exit criteria, such as school curriculum, literacy in the native language, and the type of ESL/bilingual education program available in the school.

Many agencies, such as the Bilingual Education Service Centers and the bilingual offices of state departments of education, provide technical assistance to school systems. Once entry and exit criteria are established, close monitoring

of a student's progress is required in order to determine whether programmatic changes are needed, and to avoid categorizing the student as LEP for an indefinite period of time.

Cost Factors Involved in the Education of LEP Children

Many local school administrators wrongly assume that it is up to state or federal authorities to bear total responsibility for financing the education of LEP children. This misapprehension has forced some school administrators to make last-minute adjustments in their budgets when it became clear that financial support from state and/or federal authorities was not forthcoming. Late budgetary adjustments often generate ill feeling, community complaints, and inadequate service.

Although there are many tests designed to measure language proficiency by age or grade level, there are no clear guidelines for determining how long a student should receive specialized help.

Even if monies seem to be available from state or federal sources, there is no guarantee that they will be allocated in sufficient amounts or in time to implement scheduled activities. The prudent course for local authorities is to take into consideration the educational needs of all children and to reflect those needs in the local budget. The parents of LEP children view such efforts as manifestations of institutional responsiveness and good will. Moreover, fiscal commitment by local agencies has always been looked upon favorably by other government authorities, particularly when school districts apply for additional financial assistance.

Many school systems fail to receive federal assistance because their proposals do not adhere to guidelines or because they lack adequate documentation. In other instances badly needed financial resources are not received because the local district fails to apply for the funds.

Another important consideration at budget time is the identification of local resources. Valuable human and material resources may be readily available, awaiting identification within the community.

Since most local education agencies forecast their budgetary needs a year or two in advance of scheduled activities, they often underestimate costs or fail to anticipate emerging needs. If there is evidence of a consistent enrollment of LEP children within the district, it is probably safe to assume that their numbers will increase rather than diminish. The study of migration trends indicates that people tend to move into a community because they are attracted to already existing immigrant groups.

Selection of a Teaching Model

The selection of a particular methodological approach should be the result of careful analysis of all the variables that shape a particular school system. A common mistake of educational planners is to embrace a theoretical model without first considering the feasibility of implementing it. In order to avoid this pitfall, a systemwide needs assessment should be undertaken. A crucial component of this needs assessment is an inventory of the human and material resources available within the school system. The data retrieved from the needs assessment will provide the information school administrators must have in order to make informed decisions regarding the inception of a new program or plan of operation. For example, a needs assessment may reveal that:

1. The number of LEP students is greater than anticipated.
2. The wide range of student ages complicates and sometimes defies conventional attempts at educational grouping and clustering.
3. The geographical location of LEP students does not coincide with the location of schools in which special programs for them have been implemented.
4. There are totally diverse language subgroups within the LEP student population.
5. Parents, teachers, and administrators have opinions and attitudes that are as varied and conflicting as the perspectives from which they view the problem and its solutions.

Another variable requiring careful analysis by local school district planners is the motivation for providing instruction to LEP students. If the local district is simply reacting to community pressure or to legal mandates, its reactive posture may limit both its options and its programs. If, on the other hand, the local district acts on its own initiative, the result is likely to be realistic policies leading to effective practices.

If the local school district is simply reacting to community pressure or to legal mandates, its reactive posture may limit both its options and its programs.

School policymakers, administrators, and planners must view the best possible education of LEP children as a local responsibility. They do not have to shoulder this responsibility alone, however. The combined resources available at the federal, state, and local levels are adequate to support educationally sound programs for LEP students if careful planning and monitoring occur and if there is genuine commitment on the part of all of the key participants.

Marcelo R. Fernandez-Zayas *is director of the Division of Bilingual Education for the District of Columbia Public Schools. He has served on many commissions and advisory councils in the area of second language acquisition and as a consultant to policymakers at both the state and federal levels.*

THE PARENT PERSPECTIVE

The Parent Perspective

By Tri Khac Pham

Speaking of the differences between the American and Vietnamese cultures, I have a confession to make: my knowledge of the American way of life is very limited, being a newcomer in this country. My English cannot help me express all I wish to, even though I have pained over it ever since we landed on the American soil eight years ago. Besides, I am still confused about what I should say and what I should not say. Thus, instead of discussing the basic similarities and differences between our two cultures, I am going to present to you the difficulties in terms of cultural adjustment that we, Vietnamese and most Asian people, had to face upon entering a Western community.

Besides numerous other problems, we had to face two major difficulties: learning English and adjusting to the American school system. The English language is most sophisticated and totally different from our own. The American school system is far more advanced, more scientifically oriented, giving children extensive freedom for self-development, while ours tends to be concentrated on books and urges students to follow the steps of their ancestors. For you to help us overcome our problems, you do not need to learn our language or even understand the Vietnamese educational system. Your support and understanding are what we most need and have been very grateful for. Thus, in the hope for a better understanding, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a story, the story about my own family.

On the one hand, we were lucky to have survived the Vietnam war ... But on the other hand, we were not prepared for life in a new country with a complicated language to learn and an entirely different culture in which to adapt.

Before I came to America, in my beloved Vietnam I was a teacher. The salary I brought home was not much but enough to cover for the whole family's expenses. My wife stayed home to take care of the children. Each day we had at least three opportunities to talk to each other: lunch time, dinner time, and after dinner. We had enough time to supervise the children's school work and their behavior. If they were good, we encouraged them to do better. If they had problems or misbehaved, we got to correct them in time. They were taught to

concentrate on their studies; their parents would take care of everything else. Whenever they needed new clothes, books, or some money for their own pleasure, their parents would provide for them. They were constantly assured of their parents' love and support, giving them a sense of security. But they were also reminded of the punishments they would receive if they slacked off on their school work or had problems with their friends or teachers. A well-educated human being should never have any problems with anybody.

As time moved on, my wife and I gradually began to lag behind our children in the process of cultural adjustment.

Then came that awful event of April 1975. South Vietnam was invaded and taken over by the communists. My family followed the path of the evacuation and arrived in the United States. On the one hand, we were lucky to have survived the Vietnam War, the most terrible war of the century, which nobody wants to remember. But on the other hand, we were not prepared for life in a new country with a complicated language to learn and an entirely different culture in which to adapt.

As time moved on, my wife and I gradually began to lag behind our children in the process of cultural adjustment. Our children spent most of their time in an American environment – in school with teachers and classmates, after school with American friends, and at home in front of the television. They are young and their personalities can easily be molded to adapt to this new life and environment. Nowadays, both my wife and I have to work in order to cover for the family's needs. We come home exhausted from work and have just enough time to exchange a few Vietnamese words with our children before bedtime. But even if we have time, we are not knowledgeable enough to discuss anything else with our children. We are ignorant of the basic principles and structures of American society, including the educational system in this country. We feel guilty about our children because we are unable to assist them in their struggle towards a normal development. In other words, they cannot ask help, advice, or guidance from their parents as American children do when they are in trouble. Our children are alone with their problems in the new environment, new school, and new language. As for us, their parents whom they should be able to rely upon, we feel useless in response to their cry for help. You can imagine how parents feel in such a situation. We love them but do not know how to express it. We feel as if we have lost control over our children's schooling and problems.

It is true that immigrants have to deal with all kinds of difficult problems due to differences in language and culture. But I believe what the first groups of immigrants to America believed, that with love and time such problems can be overcome. One reason why this country has become one of the most powerful nations in the world is that its citizens have the opportunity to better themselves and overcome their problems.

In that spirit, a community-sponsored multicultural conference was convened in February 1982 by representatives of the many different ethnic groups residing in the Arlington, Virginia, area. The purpose of the conference was to focus attention on the concerns of limited-English proficient (LEP) students and their parents, with emphasis on problems of cultural adjustment. Parents were

equally anxious to identify the "should be" role for LEP parents regarding their children's education. We recognized that all of our problems could not be solved overnight. However, that first multicultural conference pointed us in the right direction and laid the basic groundwork for future activities, including a decision to hold a multicultural conference on an annual basis. Everyone involved in that first conference agreed that we had to improve communication among ourselves and within our community. Therefore, a special effort has been made to involve members from every language group in activities which are designed to improve our lives.

So far, we have not been successful in identifying the perfect solution to our common problems. However, most of us are aware of what needs to be done, and we are committed to working together to improve on the many services which alrady exist in our area. For example, the Citizens Advisory Committee for LEP students, Latin American Parent/Student Association, ESOL/HILT* Citizens Advisory Committee, *Comite de Padres Latino*, Laos Association, Cambodian Women for Progress, Cambodian Parents Association, Title VII Parents Advisory Subcommittee, Vietnamese Teachers Association, and Vietnamese Parents Association are all actively working with the Arlington Board of Education and Board of Supervisors in order to lend support to all LEP students and their parents who reside in the country. In addition to working with the county school system, representatives from each of these groups have held several meetings with parents to keep them informed of school activities and to get them involved in their children's education.

We feel guilty about our children because we are unable to assist them in their struggle towards a normal development.

Cultural adjustment is not an easy task. But it can be made easier with the help of various support groups working together and in concert with local officials toward mutually acceptable goals. One of the most important goals is education. All of us must work toward improving our education system for all students. For education, I believe, is the key to success in our country.

Tri Khac Pham *is president of the Vietnamese Parents Association, Arlington County, Virginia. He was a high school mathematics teacher in Vietnam and is employed by MCI Telecommunications Corporation as a systems analyst supervisor. Mr. Pham was recently selected as one of three outstanding citizens by the Arlington County ESOL/HILT Citizens Advisory Committee and as the 1983 Man of the Year by MCI.*

* English to Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training

The Parent Perspective

By Noeuth Uy Chantrea

My name is Chantrea, and I am from the country of Cambodia in Southeast Asia. Spanish-speaking people call it Camboya. On the map you will see Cambodia (Khmer or Kampuchea) – west of Vietnam, south of Laos, and east of Thailand – on the Gulf of Siam in the South China Sea.

My native language is called Khmer, which is a form of Sanskrit. We have never westernized our alphabet. When I refer to my nationality, I say, "I am a Khmer." The Khmer people are proud of the ruins of Angkor in the Siemreap province. Angkor Wat is the seventh wonder of the world. The main products of Cambodia are rice, then fish and cattle. We have our own customs and our own religion. We believe that if we do good deeds in this life, we are rewarded in the future life. Many Cambodians are Buddhists, some are Christians or Buddhist Hinayans.

In the spring of 1975, the government of my country fell to the Khmer Rouge communists. Over the next four and a half years, almost 3 million of my countrymen died of starvation and exposure or were murdered outright by these communists. These 3 million represented nearly half of the pre-war population of the country. And of the surviving 3 million Khmers, approximately 200,000 of us are abroad around the world as refugees.

As a result of the takeover by the communists, businesses, industries, and, most importantly, all educational facilities were methodically destroyed. A totally agricultural society based on manual labor was forced upon my people.

Since 1941, I have lived through four political systems: royalist, republican, Khmer communist, and Vietnamese communist. I don't believe in communism; however, I lived with it and I absorbed everything from it. When the second communist wave came in 1975, we had to flee from it. The communists tricked people by warm, sweet and soft words by saying, "We will send you to school for three months or longer." People love education. When we heard we were to go to school, everyone wanted to go. Some wives asked permission to go with their husbands. By deceiving us in this way, the communists managed to evacuate entire cities. Consequently, most of my countrymen were interned in forced labor camps across the country. It is hard to believe that this actually happened! I plowed rice fields, I slept on the ground with no mats, and I ate green grass as horses do. Here in the U.S.A. nobody does that.

One day in the late evening of July 23, 1977, all peasants came home from their harsh work in the rice fields or gardens. The bell for gathering the people in the village for dinner hadn't sounded yet. All of us, my husband, my daughters, my son, and I sat and stared at the sky, and prayed to God or Buddha to shorten the time. We were so hungry with the rationed diet of rice (10 tins of rice put into water for 30 persons with a little soup of vegetables with salt). Suddenly the head of the village came and called my husband. He got up and

went out right away. I still sat on the old mat for a little rest, waiting for dinner (I was five months pregnant). My husband had on old trousers, a patched brown shirt, with no shoes and no scarf (for Cambodian people, a scarf is very important; we use a scarf for a hat, a blanket, a bag, as a dress, and for bathing). Shortly after he left, my husband was killed by the communists. Imagine, please, how I was at that time: what to do when the childbirth came with no hospital, no clinic, no nurse, no support, no medicine, and no husband. I knew that he wouldn't come back, but how to cope? I felt like crying. No! If I did, how about my life and six children? I decided it was best not to tell anyone what had happened to my husband.

Approximately 95 percent of the children born during the red regime were destroyed. So was my son, 20 days after birth – my breast milk was not enough for him. My husband was dead, my son was dead – I felt like dying, too. But if I died, how would my other five children, aged 13, 12, 11 (twins), and 8, survive? I decided to try to live for their sake.

Cambodia is next door to Thailand. We escaped by running in the night time. When day came, we found ourselves in the forest. It's very dangerous to escape. Not too many people are able to escape at the same time – maybe only two or three. The smaller the number, the lesser the danger. Some families have to divide into smaller groups to ease the escape. Before running out of Cambodia, we had to move from province to province. That took time. When the time was right, we ran out. Some were killed on the way, some were injured. From the last station to the border it took one day and one night to arrive at the refugee camp. The people who lived in the western and northern part of Cambodia had an easier time of escaping that did those in the central or southern areas. We could not take anything with us, just clothing that we were wearing as we went out in the morning or in the afternoon or as we would go to the farm or rice field not far from home.

We share with all refugees the necessity to adjust to new ways, yet we feel a great need to hold onto our heritage and our past. So we must find the middle road – the way for our children to become successful Americans while keeping somewhere in their hearts a respect for their parents and the country of their ancestors.

In the refugee camp we received clothing, pots, plates, spoons, etc. We began our first new life there, trying to figure out how to get to a free country. I had no relatives and no friends to sponsor me and my children in the United States. My only choice was to try to send or give my two oldest children to one family who was going to Khau I Dang. A couple of days later they left with my children. I gave the rest of my children out this way, hoping that someday we would be reunited. Much later I exited alone. I was called for an interview and assigned to Thailand, not knowing where my five children were. I had sent three of them with a Thai family living near the border. They had already moved. Everything seemed hopeless for me. I wrote to all the organizations such as the International Red Cross and even to the Prime Minister of Thailand begging for help to find my children. I spent about one year in this border refugee camp,

and then I was sent on to the Philippines. Generally, Cambodians stay there two to three years before being allowed to go to their final destination. I was sent to the United States after a couple of years. Through the intervention of the international organizations, I was finally reunited with my five children here in Arlington, Virginia. Many Khmers are still in camps today, waiting for sponsorships to go to the West. Some left Cambodia in 1979 and are still in the camps. They cannot go back across the border to Cambodia. It's certain that they would be killed. Some parents remain in Cambodia, having allowed their children to go out to another country which is not communist.

When we first came to the United States of America we Khmers acted as if we were a baby of one year of age or maybe two – just learning how to walk, how to speak, how to laugh. That means it is easy to fail. We know our own language, but we don't know how things work here. We do not know English – the language is a barrier for us.

As is always the case, the very young suffered most brutally when the communists invaded our country. Our children were taken from us by force at age five or six and kept in separate work camps. For five long years our young people in these camps were allowed no education – no reading, no writing, no mathematical instruction was permitted. Many children then spent two years in a refugee camp – again without receiving an education. As a consequence, our children arrived in the United States five or more years behind their peers in education. This means that 14-year-old children know virtually nothing. This is the starting point of education for many Khmer children. They are much farther behind than the children of Laos and Vietnam. Khmer children have no books, and they don't know how to read, even in their native language. Therefore, it is much more difficult to teach them English when they are illiterate in their own language. Their problems become even greater when compared to American children who, at age 14, are already in high school or will be soon. There is such a difference in achievement between American children and Khmer children.

In happier times, my country had a strong and ancient tradition of respect for education and almost a reverence for educators. We taught our children from the earliest age to show the greatest respect to teachers and parents equally. And the opportunity for education was a great honor. But now we find ourselves – truly – "strangers in a strange land." We share with all refugees the necessity to adjust to new ways, yet we feel a great need to hold onto our heritage and our past. So we must find the middle road – the way for our children to become successful Americans while keeping somewhere in their hearts a respect for their parents and the country of their ancestors.

This conflict of cultures can cause great distress and confusion in our families. In my country, except in the largest cities, we lived a very traditional life – girls and boys were strictly disciplined by their parents, kept close to home, and required to be contributing members toward the benefit of the family and the village as a whole.

Girls and young women were closely supervised by their families and were not allowed to leave the home unchaperoned. Very often, girls were given only sufficient education to allow them to function in a confined home environment, first as an assistant to their mother and then as a wife and mother.

Young men's career expectations did not usually go beyond the village boundaries and very often followed the work tradition of the older family males. Most rural young men received their only education in the village Buddhist pagoda. Not until 1960 did a national education system develop which reached into the most rural areas.

The future for the Khmer refugees who did make it to the United States is uncertain. The first difficulty is to learn English – both writing and speaking. It's so hard to find a job without these skills. Some refugees have been looking for jobs for many months, even before they finish school. Some are still jobless. Some have tried for four or five months or even one year and still have no job. They are not lazy at all, but education is a major barrier for them. Most Khmers work very hard and do good work once they find a job. For us, it is a great honor to have a job.

When we first came to the United States of America we Khmers acted as if we were a baby of one year of age or maybe two – just learning how to walk, how to speak, how to laugh. That means it is easy to fail. We know our own language, but we don't know how things work here. We do not know English – the language is a barrier for us.

Khmer children have no books, and they don't know how to read, even in their native language. Therefore, it is much more difficult to teach them English when they are illiterate in their own language.

When the school sends letters for us to come to a meeting at school, we don't know what the meaning of the letter is. And if we come to school for the meeting, it doesn't make sense to us. We cannot understand what is being said; therefore it is better for us not to go. However, Arlington County does have a part-time program to help with the difficult adjustment period for the Khmer people.

As you can see, there are many differences between American and Cambodian cultures. It is no easy task for us to become "Americanized." However, we are trying. We are very grateful for all of the support we have received, particularly for our children. Our major concern is for our children to receive a quality education because only then will they be able to achieve the limits of their desires.

Noeuth Uy Chantrea *is employed by the American Red Cross. She was formerly a teacher of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Cambodia and a translator for the International Red Cross in the Philippines. She is the president and founder of the Khmer Parents Association of Arlington County, Virginia. Mrs. Chantrea was recently selected as one of three outstanding citizens by the Arlington Country ESOL/HILT Citizens Advisory Committee.*

THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Bilingual Education Program

By Anh Tuan Nguyen

Last year, I stepped off the plane and found myself in the United States. I had come to a totally new world. Everything seemed so unfamiliar. Everybody was speaking a language that I could not understand. Even the sky looked different. It was snowy, cloudy, and as unclear as my future.

People like me come from all over the world. We speak different languages. We also have various cultural backgrounds. However, we have one problem in common – adapting to a new environment. We are totally unaccustomed to the American way of life. We find it hard to understand the Americans. On the other hand, the Americans think of us as isolated, inactive people.

It looks like we are separated by a river. The water is icy, and the current is too strong for us. Trying to swim across by ourselves would be too risky. Some of us might "drown." In fact, we often become frustrated and hopeless. Most of us back up, stay apart, and avoid every contact with the outer world.

The bilingual program has been established to serve as a bridge over which new people, mostly children, will cross to join the rest of the country. It is the gateway to our future. We quickly learn how Americans live and work. In turn, we help our parents to become familiar with the new social system. We will become more and more active. Eventually, we will be able to take our place as members of the whole nation.

In addition, the bilingual program has an effect on the native-born Americans. They will have a chance to know the new settlers better, thus gradually giving up all misconceptions.

Last but not least, the children who benefit from bilingual eduation will grow up having special advantages – being able to speak two languages fluently. Imagine how easily international affairs could be settled, and how profitably the commercial enterprise could be expanded if such persons were available for the United States government and business.

Bilingual education is truly bringing the newcomers into the mainstream of the nation. It is helping to unite people while encouraging each individual to retain his uniqueness. The united body of the people will help build the United States into an even stronger country.

Anh Tuan Nguyen *is enrolled in the Cleveland, Ohio, Public Schools. Her essay was selected as one of three first-prize winners in the second annual national writing contest for bilingual education students sponsored by the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE). It is reprinted here by permission of NABE.*

English As A Second

By Wida Faryar

When a foreigner comes to the United States, everything is new for him. He doesn't know the customs, the language, the people, the country, or anything else. He feels like he is lost, lonely, and confused. He struggles to find his way out of this chaos.

My teachers were the first people who helped me out when I started studying English in Glasgow Junior High School, in Fairfax County.

My teachers taught me how to speak, read, and write English. They were very helpful and friendly. They were serious and taught very well. They made me have confidence in myself, to be able to overcome my problems. It might have been very difficult for them to communicate to students who did not know English, but they did it happily without getting impatient. I always admired them deep in my heart for what a hard job they had. They never got mad, even in times when they should have. The books they were using were very interesting. All my classes were very enjoyable.

This year I am in J.E.B. Stuart High School in Fairfax County. I still need to learn more English in order to be able to continue my education through college. My teachers are really great because they help me improve my English and expand my vocabulary. They are also helping me get ready for college by guiding me in choosing my fields of study and taking courses that will be helpful to me later. Now everything has changed for me. I have found many friends, and I am not lonely anymore. I owe all of this to my ESL teachers. I will always admire them and be proud of them.

Language Program

By Thu Huynh

Little more than one year ago, I never thought that I could use English to express my thoughts or feelings. I never thought that things would have changed like this. With rapid learning and improved living conditions, I have been changing many things, such as eating American food, working with American friends, dressing in American styles, and speaking English. I enjoy American music very much. Little by little, I'm getting used to the weather and the working time of America. School time, fire drills, and announcements in school are not strange things like they were before. The more I speak English, the more I learn and the more confident I have become.

Since I first came to the United States, ESL class has helped me a lot in making things straight and understanding things clearly. I have a chance to work with people who have the same problem in English and have the same ability. Participating in ESL class and practicing activities in English are very helpful to me when I go to my other classes.

One of the things I have to say is that there is an opportunity in education. Schools have everything, including all materials for learning. Schools always are in good condition. Parents and schools working together provide the students with good education and help to support many of the students' activities. There are counselors in addition to teachers, vice principals and a principal. Students can join many sports teams and many clubs for fun and competition. The American educational system allows people to continue to study in college even if they are working.

I thought that it would never seem easy for me to understand everything in this country, but time has passed, things have changed, and now I would say that the United States of America is a rich country where people from many parts of the world live and work together harmoniously. It has a great educational system.

Wida Faryar *and* ***Thu Huynh****, are essay contest winners enrolled in the Fairfax County, Virginia, ESL program.*

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION

State boards influence the educational direction in the state. State boards do not act alone: they interact with the chief state school officer, the legislature, the governor, local constituents, and state level associations of administrators, teachers, and school boards. Through their state level policy development and adoption process, and by virtue of their relationship with the state legislatures, state boards determine the tone, direction, and quality of education in their states.

Created in 1959 with an initial membership of eleven states, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) now has a membership composed of the state boards of education in 46 states and five U.S. territories. It is a dynamic and effective association representing these state boards of education as they seek to promote quality education in the states and to strengthen the tradition of lay control of American public education.